

# Division of Public Health Welcomes New Dental Director

**DOVER**— The Division of Public Health (DPH) is pleased to welcome Dr. Nicholas Conte, as Dental Director for the DPH Bureau of Oral Health and Dental Services (BOHDS).

Dr. Conte is a prosthodontist who most recently served as the Director of Clinical Research and Education for Dentsply Sirona.

He has prior experience in both private practice and as a faculty member at New Jersey Dental School (renamed the Rutgers School of Dental Medicine), where he taught both undergraduate and post-graduate prosthodontics.

Dr. Conte has lectured extensively both nationally and internationally, conducted clinical research trials, and worked on product development teams for impression materials, composites, adhesives, and cements.

“We are fortunate to have someone with Dr. Conte’s qualifications joining the DPH family,” said DPH Director Dr. Karyl Rattay. “It is exciting to find a leader who has touched on so many different areas in his profession. His recognition of the value of oral health and how it impacts overall health will help lead the Bureau of Oral Health and Dental Services into the future.”

“I am very excited and honored to be named the Dental Director and to be a part of the Division of Public Health,” Dr. Conte said. “I look forward to continuing the great work that has already been done, maintaining important partnerships previously established within the state, and fostering new relationships with external partners. I also look forward to working with the Delaware dental community to improve general awareness about the importance of oral health and the key role

it plays in our overall wellness.”

DPH dental clinics serve the Medicaid and uninsured communities (age 20 and under) surrounding each of its five state service centers throughout Delaware. The BODS has made great strides in promoting oral health in the state, including:

- launching the First Smile Delaware website. The website serves as a communications anchor point, providing a place where people can access information on oral health literacy, providers’ resources, parent resources, and prenatal, infant and young children patient education cards.
- recruiting a pediatric dentist to practice in Sussex County in 2013, through a special loan repayment award funded by the Oral Health Workforce Development grant. Prior to this, Sussex County had not had a pediatric dentist and this was considered to be one of the most pressing needs to provide dental care for children.
- providing dental care for Medicaid-eligible children at DPH’s five state-wide clinics. More detail on the school-linked program is below. An Electronic Dental Record (EDR) was implemented in December 2012 that will contribute to greater efficiency and quality of care.

The Bureau of Oral Health and Dental Services was awarded a Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) Oral Health Workforce Activities grant in the amount of \$481,826 for each of the next three years. The grant will address:

- training dental professionals to improve access to dental care for people with disabilities.
- integration of oral health into primary care in Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs).
- expansion of oral health outreach and disease prevention in schools and communities.

DPH has also implemented several oral health programs that are integrated within the school systems throughout the state.

- Seal-A-Smile Program – This program brings dental care to Delaware elementary schools through a state of the art mobile dental van. Children come onto the van for a quick exam by a volunteer dentist to determine which may qualify to have sealants placed. A public health dental hygienist then places the sealants on these teeth along with a fluoride varnish. This program is primarily for children who have Medicaid. DPH is actively seeking additional dentists to volunteer and assist with the screening processes.
- Delaware Smile Check – This program aims to provide resources for children who are not receiving regular dental care. A public health hygienist travels to the school and performs screenings using a portable dental chair and light in order to determine a child's need for dental care. If the child has noticeable cavities or excess of plaque buildup, the hygienist will make a referral to a local dentist. The hygienist will also help coordinate treatment if he she sees an emergency situation, and follow up with to make sure he/she has been taken care of. The goal is to let parents/guardians know the oral health status of each child and provide them with the education and resources to get the best care possible. This program is available to all students regardless of their Medicaid status.
- School Linked Program – This is DPH's largest and most successful program in which students with returned medical histories and permission slips are picked up during normal school hours, either before or after lunch, and transported to the nearest state service center to receive full comprehensive dental care. This includes x-rays, cleanings, exams from the dentist, fillings, sealants, fluoride treatments and in some cases, extractions. The program addresses barriers for

parents/guardians who do not have a car/transportation or cannot afford to miss time from work to take their children to appointments. Correspondence is relayed to parents/guardians after each check-up and before any follow up work is completed. This program is available only for children who have Medicaid, however, no child with a dental need or emergency is refused treatment.

The Bureau also participates in community activities as often as possible such as Mission of Mercy, Stand Down, and Give Kids A Smile, while providing donations and coordinating educational outreach for various organizations.

For more information on BOHDS and the services it offers, call 302-744-4554 or visit <http://dhss.delaware.gov/dhss/dph/hsm/ohphome.html>.

*A person who is deaf, hard-of-hearing, deaf-blind or speech-disabled can call the DPH phone number above by using TTY services. Dial 7-1-1 or 800-232-5460 to type your conversation to a relay operator, who reads your conversation to a hearing person at DPH. The relay operator types the hearing person's spoken words back to the TTY user. To learn more about TTY availability in Delaware, visit <http://delawarerelay.com>.*

*Delaware Health and Social Services is committed to improving the quality of the lives of Delaware's citizens by promoting health and well-being, fostering self-sufficiency, and protecting vulnerable populations. DPH, a division of DHSS, urges Delawareans to make healthier choices with the 5-2-1 Almost None campaign: eat 5 or more fruits and vegetables each day, have no more than 2 hours of recreational screen time each day (includes TV, computer, gaming), get 1 or more hours of physical activity each day, and drink almost no sugary beverages.*